Depot Town Rag

Volume 18, Number 4 *"All the news in one block in one month."*

April 1995

100% FREE Rag Content

- Double Death at the Creamery
- ***Sidewalk elegance***
- Carribean tour offered
- **Slicker takes note**

and other strictly local stuff. . . .

A Publication of the DEPOT TOWN ASSOCIATION, INC. P.O. Box 970-235, Ypsilanti, MI 48197-0804

Foolin' around in April

Several years ago *The Rag* published a special April Fools edition that was so unlike the usual monthly publication that not many were picked up by our readers on the block. In spite of the fact that the denizens of Depot Town revel in good humor all year 'round, they still didn't recognize the elaborate printed joke. No wonder; they take the renaissance of this business district very seriously.

This month's theme has to do with the usefullness of funny ideas. We've had more than a few down by the railroad tracks:

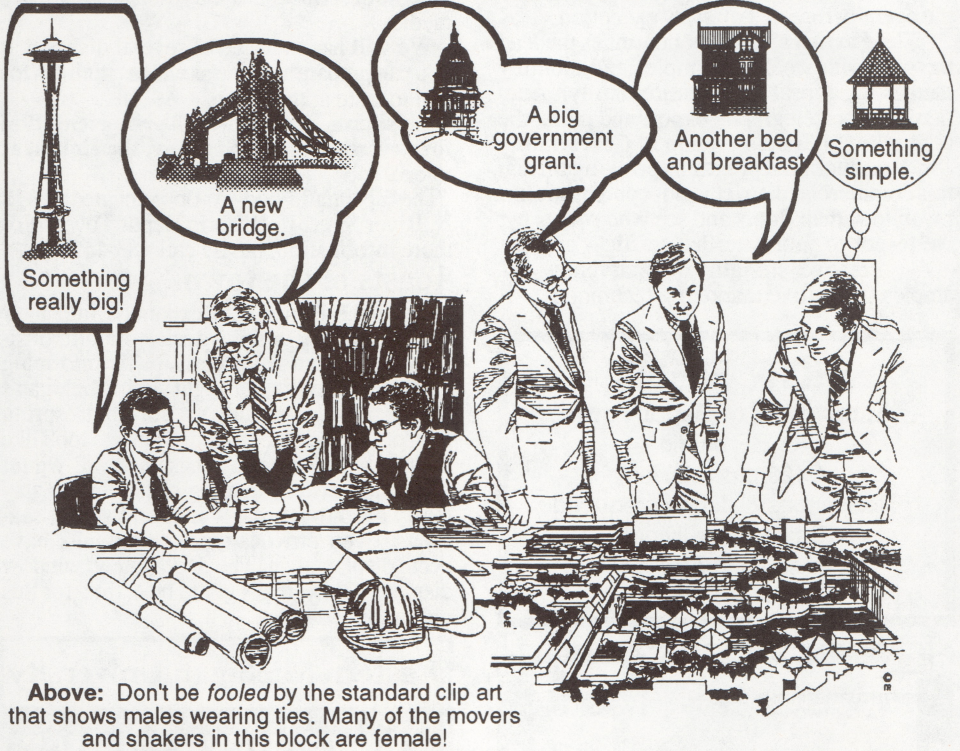
- "You've got to be kidding," they said when the Michigan Artrain scheduled a lay-over here in 1972. "Nobody will want to look at art in the town's decrepit rail yards."
- They all laughed when Gerry French and Beverly Shankwiler asked the Chamber of Commerce for help in turning the district into a tourist Mecca something akin to what Frankenmuth had done.
- Another big joke was the desire to get the abandoned freighthouse away from Conrail and turn it into a farmers' market. "It'll never happen," they said.
- And there were plenty of giggles when it was suggested the city put on an annual festival to celebrate the area's history.
- Even the City Attorney thought it was just a joke when locals proposed a second Downtown Development Authority. "It can't be done!" quipped the experts.
- More fooling around was experienced when someone suggested turning the former railroad dumping ground into a paved parking lot with no parking meters allowed.
- Moving an ancient caboose to the neighborhood was a big joke; so was the replication of the crossing guard tower. Painting up those old buildings and investing their lifes' savings in the businesses drew smirks, as well. Television commercials for the block also drew derisive hoots from some.

Lots of laughs have come and gone over the last two decades. Depot Town has been the brunt of jokes for two decades - jokes that were told by folks who just couldn't believe that there was any value in those old buildings or that anyone would take seriously a commercial district in structures that were well more than a hundred years old.

Today's Depot Towners still laugh a lot - all the way to the bank. And some have said they have proven the old dictum that "He who laughs ... lasts!" There's the sound of healthy laughter everywhere down here these days.

An April Fools' agenda?

DTA debates new directions for the district



Above: Don't be *fooled* by the standard clip art that shows males wearing ties. Many of the movers and shakers in this block are female!

What's next for Depot Town?

When Judi Monaghan, past president of the Depot Town Association, reviewed the previous year's priorities, heads turned at every side of table. Just when a few thought the district had reached its peak in its twenty-year turnaround, it seemed that efforts to improve the block were still moving full speed ahead. Past successes fueled the fires for even more headway along these old railroad tracks.

District activists proudly reviewed the most recent past record and realized that many of the priorities had seemed Impossible Tasks just a year ago. Now, nobody was laughing (derisively, at least!) and what had seemed to be Foolish Dreams had become reality:

- Develop block advertising
- Greater diversity in new businesses
- More television coverage
- More merchant involvement in district promotions
- Broaden the base of volunteers
- Create more district tie-ins with Frog Island Jazz Festival
- Install a 'money machine' on the block
- Review DTA constitution & by laws

In addition to the prioritized listing, several other promotions had fallen into place, due to the efforts of others. The St. Patrick's Day parade was organized by the Gaelic League of Ypsilanti and parallel parking was being explored by the DDA. Even with its excellent track record, progress was happening down here even faster that the DTA could handle.

Plans for more festivals, parades, renovations, and promotions were still on the drawing boards, and newer listings of private and public priorities continue to grow.

April's DTA meeting (on the 20th, at Renewed Interest Antiques) will continue those *foolish* kinds of wish lists - and the everyone continues to be invited to join in on the commercial world's most practical *practical joke*!

Dateline: Depot Town

A Neighborhood Forgotten by Time (and Life and Newsweek)

March promotions carried us into spring

• **Jeffrey Bruce did beauty analyses at Richard Reid's Hair Station** with over 50 women attending the elegant event in Richard's third floor ballroom.

• **Eight stations in a beer-tasting buffet at Cady's Grill** acquainted hundreds with imports and micro-breweries. Nancy Riggs, Sticks co-manager, put the concept together and participants agreed that Cady's buffet was spectacular. March 21 saw a benefit for the Ypsilanti Schools Foundation at Cady's, as well.

• **Fifty entries in the St. Patrick's Day Parade** showed that the year-long ministrations of the Gaelic League of Ypsilanti really do pay off. Thousands turned out for the only such event on that day in Michigan. The daily *Press/News* got with it this year and promoted the event before and after its execution.

• **The Farmers' Market** continues the lead the way with weekly examples and monthly themes the appeal to the entire family. Auctions, music, telegraphy expos, and more, the facility is still Ypsi's version of Cobo Hall.

Such promotional programs prove again that this commercial district is not content to simply unlock their doors and see who comes by; we've got to motivate that traffic - and the above creative stimulii are marvelous examples of creative marketing techniques.

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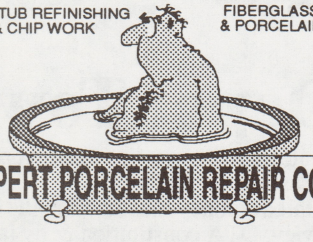

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Visit the Caribbean right here!

Cooking Encounters: Saturday 8 April: Recipes from the Caribbean - 11am - 2pm

For a different blend of flavors and a new twist to vegetarian cooking we will be sampling some dishes typcial of the Caribbean Islands.

Most recipes show the influences of the British, Dutch, French, Spanish, East Indian, West African, Portugese and Chinese. Because of this grand mingling of traditions, Caribean dishes are uniquely seasoned with a bit of this and a bit of that and are what could be best described as a calypso/salsa culinary medley.

We will have recipes of several dishes that you can prepare at home as well as samples for you to taste at the co-op.

Ypsilanti Food Co-op April orientation for new members is Satuday, the eighth, at noon.

The Ypsilanti Food Co-op is located at 312 N. River Street in Historic Depot Town. For more information, please call 483-1520

Toasts of the town

Since the Depot Doo expanded into their tanning parlors to the west last month, business has grown from early in the morining until late, late, late at night with Michigan's 'snow bunnies' toning up for their spring breaks in the south. Nobody wants to look like they've been living in a basement all winter and Linda Lister's tanning beds seem to stay toasty all through the winter and spring seasons. Even provocative bathing suits have been displayed in The Doo's new window displays. Now, that's got to be a 'first' for this old railroad district.

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Merchants reward each other

Knowing that some of the district's best customers are people who work in the district themselves, several supporters of the block have offered special incentives on a monthly basis through their sponsorship of this monthly publication. Quick perusal of the advertising copy will find up to 20% off on services and/or merchandise on certain days of the month or week.

Sponsors are encouraged to follow these good examples and offer parallel specials in their area of expertise - for the good of the block. Just let the editor know what you want your copy to say next month (482-6371).

DDA proposal to be made

Association representatives will present proposals to the Depot Town Downtown Development Authority regarding district beautification and exterior electrical outlets at its April 5 meeting a 8 a.m. in the Freighthouse.

Historic buildings are the focus

Both the *daily* and weekly news media which serve our area are following a feature which has long proved popular in this little *monthly*. Any newcomer to Our Town will quickly note that the readership is devoutly interested in the local history as shown through its excellent stock of architecture. Libraries and historical collections hold a treasure trove of images and every block has someone in residence who can still remember when the picture was taken and maybe even who took it.

Anecdōte: A colleague from England marveled at the requirement of American History at the local high schools. "You certainly make a big deal over a paltry two hundred or so years," she scoffed. "Why, most of your History teachers must have lived at least a quarter of that history, themselves!"

And it's still good business to feature our short - but colorful - history.

Brent Charles Wilber,

Depot Town writer & artist,
will read his works at the Daily Grind's 'Open Mike' from 6-7 p.m. Sunday, 2 April
Fellow writers are encouraged to share the space with Brent for this special evening.
In May The Grind will feature Wilber's drawings on the walls throughout the month.

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To his wife Cox wrote the longest letter of all, recalling pleasant outings they had enjoyed together and telling her how he had always loved her. "I am a worthless sinner," he added, "and it is better for you all that I be out of the way and that you should think of me as such or forget me. But later he begs her to remember him kindly."

"This woman was good to me," he wrote in another place in the letter. "Not so good as you, though, Carrie. You were the best to me, but I could not live loving you both, and I could not live a double life longer, so this way is best."

Relatives came to Ypsilanti

The wife and mother came to Ypsilanti on a late train last night. This morning they refused to talk, except to say that they knew nothing of the causes which led to the deed, had never seen the dead woman and knew nothing of her.

They will stay here until after the funeral, which will be held tomorrow afternoon from the chapel in Highland cemetery, the interment taking place in the mother's lot in that cemetery. May Camp's resting place hs not yet been provided, although her adopted father, Mr. Wilkinson, is expected here today.

Evidence of a struggle

This morning Officer Ryan visited the scene of the finding of the bodies and made a thorough search of the place, and although a bottle bearing a carbolic acid label and a Monroe druggist's name was found there yesterday, he found another fresher bottle, which had contained the same fluid and which was purchased of a druggist in Ypsilanti. Said Officer Ryan: "the corn shock was torn to pieces, and showed every evidence of a struggle. This bears out the theory that Cox forced her to take the poison, although she may have been doped before."

Mrs. Camp's remains taken to Detroit

Mr. Wilkinson, adopted father of Mrs. Camp, reached the city at 12:45 today, and made arrangements for caring for the body of his adopted daughter. The body was taken to Detroit at 5:10 tonight and will be buried there.

"May was but 19," said Mr. Wilkinson, "and was married at the age of 16 years."

In answer to a question in the filling out of the death certificate, he added that she was not divorced.

"She left home Monday afternoon," he said. "No, I did not know that she had been either to Toledo or Monroe, where one of the bottles came from."

"The first and only time I ever saw the man was a week or ten days ago, when he came to the house one noon just as I was leaving. He was introduced to me at (that) time. I did not know of their intimacy or where she met him."

Mr. Wilkinson is a pleasant appearing man, who made a good impression on all whom he met by his evident desire to do the right thing.

All last evening and this morning a curious crowd of idle, morbid people thronged the rooms of Mack & Mack's store, eager for a sight of the two unfortunates and eager for each revolting detail. In many cases, where these were wanting they were supplied by the crowd and passed on with evident relish.

The removal of the remains today to other places has topped in a measure this feature of the case. The police are still working on the case, and Mr. Wilkinson has gone to Ann Arbor to identify the three written words of his daughter added to the note to his wife.

Ypsilanti Daily Press, 27 October 1905

Believes it was murder

Mr. Wilkinson's theory on death of his niece

Few details were added to the mystery surrounding the death of Mrs. May Camp and Will Cox on Wednesday, except the statement given out by Mr. Wilkinson on his return from Ann Arbor, where he went to see the letters left by Cox. M. Wilkinson said: "No part of those letters was written by my niece and adopted daughter, May Camp. Even the three words at then end did not in any way resemble her handwriting and I believe that to have been a clever forgery on Cox's part. Neither do I believe that my niece took her own life. I believe that murder was committed."

Mr. Wilkinson stated further to the Daily Press that Mrs. Camp left home Monday afternoon, saying she was coming to Ypsilanti and would return that night. As she did not return considerable worry was experienced, but all day Tuesday she was momentarily expected, the theory being that she had stayed with some friend in Detroit on Monday night.

What did happen is this. Mrs. Camp came to Ypsilanti on Monday afternoon, where she met Cox, who had been in the city and was known to have been drinking heavily. Monday night they went to the Ypsilanti house where Cox was not known, and where they registered as Mr. and Mrs. Camp. From some indications in the room it is possible that one or the other may have taken the morphine at that time, but if so merely enough to nauseate and not produce death. The couple left there Tuesday afternoon and did not return. Where they went from that time is unknown, but it is probable that they went for the walk from which they never returned.

Evidence is also pretty well assured that both bottles were filled with carbolic acid at a drug store in this city, and that both bottles were procured by Mrs. Camp, who was waited upon by different persons. The acid was procured at different times.

Mr. Wilkinson took the body of his niece to Detroit on the 5:10 train last night and the funeral will be held tomorrow in Detroit. Mr. Wilkinson stated that he would make every effort to clear his niece of the suicide charge and that he thought it could be proven that she was forced to take the drug. He also said it ws his intention to have the stomach examined when he reached Detroit.

Mrs. Camp had a $1,000 policy in the Prudential Life Insurance Company.

Ypsilanti Daily Press, 30 October 1905

Visited scene of the tragedy

Coroner Burchfield will make investigation

Coroner Burchfield, with the jury, impaneled by him for the inquest over the death of Will C. Cox and May Camp, yesterday visited the scene of the finding of the bodies and made a thorough search of the grounds as well as the conditions found at that time. The cork from one of the bottles of carbolic acid and the girl's hatpin were found.

The coroner is working on the theory that Mrs. Camp was murdered by Cox, and is determined that the case shall be sifted to the bottom. He is also determined that the inquest shall not be a merely formal affair, but will settle, if possible, how the parties came to their death, reports sent out to the Detroit papers notwithstanding.

To this end a half eaten apple found near the bodies and evidently eaten by the woman has been sent to the university, where it will be analyzed to see if it had been doped, on the supposition that she may have been quieted in that way, the carbolic acid being given later to make the deed sure...

Ypsilanti Daily Press, 4 November 1905

Cox suicide, Camp murder

Verdict of coroner's jury in inquest last night

After four hours last night devoted to listening to the evidence of the eleven witnesses subpoenaed in the Cox-Camp inquest and a consideration of the evidence *in toto* after they retired to the jury room the six jurors brought in a verdict of suicide in the case of William Cox, and in the case of Mrs. Camp a verdict which was a tacit admission of murder, although that word was carefully expurged from the vocabluary used.

The formal wording of the two verdicts was as follows, the jury having been instructed to bring in a separate verdict in each case:

"That William Cox came to his death on the night of October 24 by taking some poisonous drug, and not otherwise."

"That Mrs. May Camp came to her death by hands unknown to this jury and not otherwise."

Following the reading of the verdict the prosecution attorney, Andrew J. Sawyer, Jr., who was present and who fought the case step by step to quash in so far as was possible the murder theory, demanded that the jury be polled. This was done, each juror responding to his name with a further declaration that the verdict was his opinion...[Juror's names]

...The evidence was along the line which has been published before, the only new facts brought being that of Kirkans, who roomed with Cox in Toledo and who testified that Cox wrote a letter to Miss Wilkinson, Twelfth street, Detroit, Cox telling him he was writing to his girl. He claimed his wife was coming to spend Sunday with him, finally admitting it was his girl instead of his wife. She came, remained until Monday and left a scrap of writing in the room in the shape of a letter to "Dear Auntie and Baby," in which she said they would be surprised at not hearing from her before. This letter was offered to the jury together with the word: "May", at the close of the joint letter for identification. The stepfather positively denied the writing in both cases. He also says she did not leave home until Monday afternoon.

A pathetic feature of the inquest was the fact that while the damaging evidence was being introduced in the case the infant, fatherless babe of Cox was cooing and lisping in its mother's arms in the room, unconscious of the scene being enacted around him.

May: Man dead in Huron River in 1907

Depot Town's Antique Engine Club shows team spirit

President Bill Kasper announces twenty members attended the February meeting. Show directories are for sale at $5 each. April meeting is 7:30p.m. 27 April at the Freighthouse. Up-coming events include:

- North American Model Engineering Exposition, April 22-23, Wyandotte
- Farmers Antique Tractor & Engine Association, May 12-14, Adrian
- Hudson Mills Metropark, June 2-4, Hudson Mills, MI
- Classic Farmfest, June 9-11, Saline

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Depot Town Association, 16 March 1995 minutes

- **Minutes of February** approved as published.
- **Rag Report:** More murder and mayhem for April also with traditional April fare. Discussion concerning the need for Depot Town brochures.
- **Market Report:** Parking priorities around the freighthouse and Farmers' Market being discussed. New applicants to Farmers' Market reported such as Exotic Bakeries.
- **Events:** St. Patrick's Day parade at 2 p.m. on 17 March with lots of family entertainment was a real highlight.
- **Merchants:** A subcommittee consisting of Bill and Sandee French, Sandy Hoag, Carole Hansen, and Judy Julie to meet on 20 March at 9 a.m. at Cady's to form a proposal for area beautification to present at next DDA meeting, 5 April 18 a.m. at the Freighthouse.

Old Business:

- **Bylaws review** tabled.

New Business:

- **Heritage Festival:** Tom Steele to approach VCB concerning street vendors for the Heritage Festival. DTA approached by an experienced individual who is interested tin taking on the project of scheduling crafters for the festival. It was agreed that nothing would go forward until the VCB was approached.
- **Public Relations for Depot Town:** Bill French volunteered to speak to and hold a meeting with merchants concerning PR and events for Depot Town.
- **Best Yet Award:** Bill French for volunteering his time and putting forth effort to promote Depot Town.
- **Golden Goose:** To the party or parties who have broken into, vandalized, and stolen from Crystal Cards and Me 'N' My Sisters Country Store.

Depot Town Association Inc.
Next Meeting:
7:30 p.m. Thursday, April 20
Renewed Interest Antiques,33 East Cross
Immediate seating; no reservation necessary

DTA

The Depot Town Association, Inc.

•

***On the right track* since 1976**

THE DEPOT TOWN RAG

A publication of the Depot Town Association, Inc. a nonprofit, tax-exempt corporation dedicated to preserving the unique character of the neighborhood and to the enhancement of its business climate.

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Ypsilanti, Michigan 48198-7403
Phone: 313-482-6371

The Depot Town Association, Inc.
-Tom Steele, president
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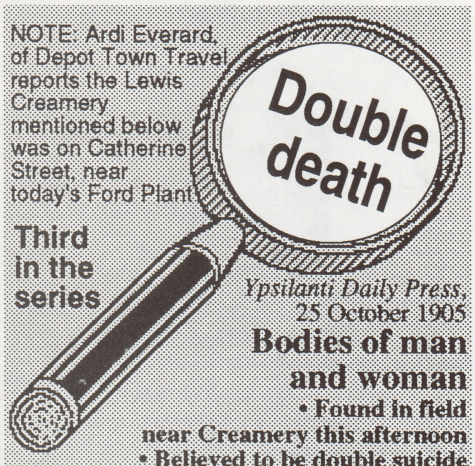

NOTE: Ardi Everard, of Depot Town Travel reports the Lewis Creamery mentioned below was on Catherine Street, near today's Ford Plant.

Third in the series

Ypsilanti Daily Press, 25 October 1905

Bodies of man and woman

• Found in field near Creamery this afternoon

• Believed to be double suicide - man identified

As two boys were returning from a hunting trip this afternoon they discovered the bodies of a man and a woman lying dead in a cornfield near the creamery, the indications pointing to a double suicide. The woman, who was apparently between the ages of 25 and 30 years, was lying across a shock of corn. She was dressed in a blue skirt, a white waist and wore a blue hat. She was fair with yellow hair. Her expression, in spite of the fact that her lips were burned with the acid she had evidently taken from a bottle lying near, which was marked corbolic acid, was most peaceful, and she apparently died witout a sturggle.

At a little distance from her and lying as if he had suffered considerable agony, was the body of the man, apparently about 35 years of age, and well dressed in a white flannel shirt, a grey suit, patent leather shoes and a black soft felt hat.

Clifford Teall and his brother, who found the bodies, hastened to the creamery, where they procured aid and returned to the scene of the double suicide. None of those who viewed the bodies recognized either of them and from appearances it would seem that they had been dead all night.

Later - The man was identified as Billy Cox, a well known man who has been a printer in the city. Cox was about town on Monday and asked everyone he met for money. Later he went to the *Ypsilantian* office and was suspected in connection with the riffling of that office that evening. He had not been seen since. The woman's face was badly burned by the acid from the bottle, which bore the name of Meloche Bros., of Monroe. She was unknown here. She wore a heavy black coat, gloves, no rings and black oxfords. Both bodies were cold and set and the man's face wore an agonized look.

Cox was married.

Ypsilanti Daily Press, 26 October 1905

Was a crime committed?

• Some peculiar features in yesterday's tragedy

• Scene where deaths occurred show evidence of severe struggle

Did May Camp, who together with Will Cox was found dead in a corn field back of the creamery yesterday, die by her own hand or from poison forced down her throat by Cox, is a theory of some of those intersted in yesterday's tragedy.

Did she, after the fatal compact was formed, lose courage for the deed and growing faint hearted, determine not to commit the crime?

Did Cox, driven to desperation by her continued presence, force her to take the poison which caused her death and did she in her agony and fear cry for help?

Neighbors in the vicinity of the creamery are said to have heard cries for help on Tuesday night, and this clue will be followed up and witnesses suponeaed for the inquest which will be held next week, Friday night.

The placid expression on the face of the woman when she was found, together with the fact that in spite of the written words, "We took morphine which I bought in Toledo," her face is badly burned with carbolic acid from a bottle found empty near the body, lead to the supposition that possibly she never felt the burn of the acid, but was given morphine which doped her after which Cox forced the acid into her mouth, covering her face and chin in the attempt.

Cox, then overcome by remorse of his past deeds and this latest crime, took the morphine which killed him, his face expressing the horror of himself and his final act in a misspent life.

Lived a double life

The story of the illicit love between the two fragmentary, his wife and mother both being ignorant of the woman and her claims on him.

Will Cox learned his trade seventeen years ago in the old Commercial office where he proved a good workman going later to the Scharf Tag Works, where he was employed up to about eight years ago, when he went to Detroit, and secured a position as foreman at the Cadillac Printing Company. Later he went to the Journal where he was employed as a Mergenthaler operator, and leaving there to go to the Mack Printing Company, where he was employed until a month ago, when the strike began, when he returned his local card to the typographical union and took his traveling card and has been traveling ever since, securing work where he could.

Three weeks ago he left home and went to Toledo, where he remained but a week, returning to Detroit. From his written words he must have contemplated the deed at that time, for he says he purchased the morphine in Toledo.

Ten years ago Cox married Carrie Sills, a quiet, lady-like girl, by whom he has had three children, all boys, Howard, Roy and Allyn, the latter just an infant in his mother's arms, was with her this morning as she bent over the dead body of her husband and could not be comforted, even by the mother, of whom in a last prayer the son and husband begged, "Be good to Carrie, for she is the truest woman in the world."

Cox left seven letters

Before he died and while contemplating the deed, Cox wrote seven letters, in one only of which the woman had any part. This one was written to the aunt and adopted mother of May Camp, and seemed to be rather the work of the man than the woman, as his name appears first in the signature.

One of the letters found in his pocket was sealed and addresed to his wife, Mrs. W.C.Cox, 127 Ash street, Detroit. The others were written on loose pieces of paper. One of them read as follows:

"Dear Auntie — We beg of you, dear auntie, to forgive us for this rash act. We request you to take good care of dear little innocent Alvan; see that he falls into proper hands, that he may grow to be a brave, true and honest man. Put $300 in the Union Trust Company for Alvan, and do as you see fit with the balance. May and I die loving each other, and wish to be buried side by side. Please grant us this request. Auntie, we beg of you to forgive us. We are both happy now. May God bless and protect you all, and may you live long and be happy. Again asking you to forgive us. - WILL."

Under the signature is written, in another hand, "Please forgive. May." Then follows a postscript in the man's handwriting: "We took morphine, which I bought in Toledo."

On the back of the sheet on which this letter is written is the name "Mrs. May Camp, 253 Twelfth street, Detroit," and directly under that another name, "Mrs. Margaret Wilkinson, 259 Twelfth street, Detroit."

Another letter is to the Detroit Typographical Union No. 18, of which Cox was a member. It reads:

"Dear Friends and Brothers — I have made up my mind to take my own life. It is a cowardly thing to do, but if you knew the circumstances you would not blame me. I have many friends among you who will wonder how I could do such a thing. Well, to be brief, it is the same old story of too fast a life, whisky and women. I hope you will all take warning and lead honest and true lives and you will never end as I have. My dying prayer will be that the Detroit Typographical Union No 18 will be victorious in their present heroic struggle for the betterment of the man who toils. If you will all keep up spirits, I see nothing but success for No. 18. Hope you will all forgive me for this rash, cowardly act, but it is the only way that I can see out of it. Truly yours, WILL C. COX."

Other letters were to his sister Daisy, whom he begs to be a good woman, to his brother Frank, to whom he apologizes for his cowardly act, and begs him to leave off the smoking of cigarettes, "which will injure your head and bring you to such an end as I have reached." In this same letter is the only written indication of the relations between the man and the woman, when he begs his brother to "honor other women as you do your own sisters."

Begged mother's forgiveness

Cox then wrote a long letter to his mother, telling her of the deed he was about to commit and that he was worthless and begged for forgiveness.

"I have tried so hard to lead an honest, straightforward life, but I couldn't do it, no matter how hard I tried. See that the dear little boys fall into proper hands. I want them to be good, honest men and happy. Be good to Carrie, for she is the truest woman in the world," he write, begging her to kiss dear Grace, Daisy, Frank, Minne, Carrie, John, Howard, Roy and Allyn.

In another letter to his mother Cox begged that he be buried "beside the woman I love," the word being underscored. "This is my dying request," he write, "bury us together, even if it is only a foot underground."

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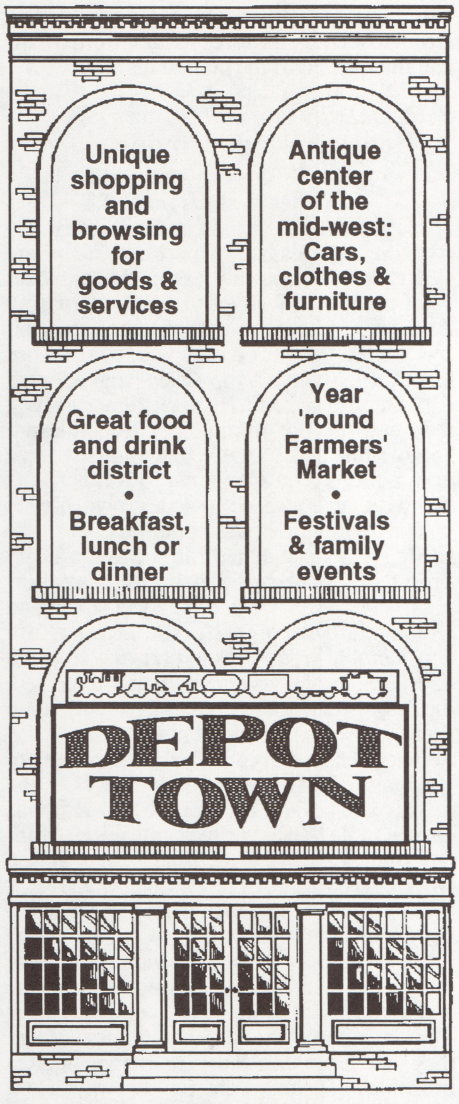
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... the rest is history; funny or not!

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